

Peh

JUL 22 1952

MY WORD

SHALL NOT RETURN UNTO ME VOID

by Walter de Velder

1834



Left to right are Mr. Sim, principal of Pootak School, Mr. de Velden, General Peh, Mr. Tan and Mr. Chen, preacher of the Lungyen Church.

STANDING in front of the Lungyen (Leng-na) Christian-Book Room on the busy main street are three of my Chinese colleagues who were used by the Holy Spirit to bring Mr. Peh Iau-Sian, Vice-General of the Chinese 55th Army into the Christian Church. Two decades ago when the armies of the so-called Christian General Fung-Yi-Hsiang made world headlines by their mass conversions and thousands of baptisms, Mr. Peh was then a junior officer in that army. He acknowledged the truth of God's

Word, but he was not baptized because he felt that unless he could take the vows seriously he should not follow the masses. In the twenty years since then, in warfare against the invader and in civil strife, Mr. Peh rose gradually in rank from junior officer to general. All this time the Spirit of God persisted in constraining him to be a Christian.

In the early spring of 1949 the Communist Armies stood on the north bank of the mighty Yangtze River. General Peh's army had already fought and retreated from Shansi, Honan and Hupeh provinces several hundred miles to the north and taken positions on the south bank of the great river. In April and May when it became evident that the Communists would cross the river, the 55th Army retreated through Kiangsi Province into Fukien. On June 1 General Peh and his tired army arrived in our city. On the long, wearying retreat through four provinces and into a fifth, Commander Peh's heart was not at peace.

His headquarters in the city were not far from the Christian Book Room and the very first evening he wandered into the building where he was given a warm welcome by Mr. Tan. It was just what the tired soldier needed, and when he left for his headquarters Mr. Tan gave him some Christian literature to read. The next day he was introduced to my other two colleagues Mr. Sim and Mr. Chen. These men helped him in contacts with the church and consistory and in their fine, Christian homes he found the peace he sought.

Now there was a Chinese pastor residing temporarily in the city, due to disturbances in his own area, and he instructed the new inquirer in the fundamental faith and practice of the Church of Christ in China. Every day for two weeks the two worked together. Twice Mr. Peh came to see me, one time spending almost two hours talk-

ing about Christ and salvation. One had the feeling that this man was sincere and not talking out of the corner of his mouth as many officials have done when talking about Christianity.

When General Peh requested baptism the consistory unanimously recommended that his name be announced for three Sundays, which is the custom of the Church in China. He asked to be called "Brother Peh." It was found that he had a good grasp of the fundamental faith and practice of the church and that he was a sincere seeker of the Lord. On July 10 in a simple but impressive service, Brother Peh was baptized. Tan Ka-Tong presented him with a large Bible in the name of the church. The Rev. W. R. Angus invited him to sit at the Lord's table there to be fed by the everlasting symbols of the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It is very evident that General Peh has found peace within himself. There are proofs too that he is a changed man and that his influence on his officers and men has been good. The Word of God had been sown in his heart twenty years ago. The Lungyen Christian Book Room was used by God in demonstrating once more that wonderful promise, "My Word shall not return unto Me void," even though it may take two decades to bear fruit.

TWO SCORE YEARS OF SERVICE

On May 17, 1947 Miss Katharine R. Green celebrated the fortieth anniversary of her arrival in China. During the program one of the church elders gave a brief history of her years of service in China. It was shown that Miss Green had worked in each of the districts of her Mission in South Fukien. In 1946 when missionaries were beginning to return to China after the war, Miss Green was stationed at Leng-na where she assist-

ed in the Government Middle School in the teaching of English. She organized a children's Sunday group and cooperated in the evangelistic work of the church.

The program itself was significant, and many of her friends who attended the celebration paid her great tribute. However, at the same time there was dedicated a Reading Room in the basement of the Leng-na church. This was a lasting and tangible bit of evidence honoring Miss Green's service. Gifts of books and scrolls were presented to Miss Green who received them in the name of the Reading Room. Over eighty books and many scrolls were given by the friends of the church and gradually it grew and was patronized by many inquirers. There is a shelf of Christian books, a table of newspapers and a rack of Christian periodicals. Many young men who came to read the newspapers remained to look over a Gospel and talk with the preacher in charge.

In 1948 the Reading Room was moved to a shop on the Main Street. Here it was more accessible and presented an attractive appearance with its whitewashed walls and maps and Bible pictures and posters hung thereon. It became the headquarters for a series of weekly meetings on health and hygiene. This series was followed by a few weeks of English Bible lessons which attracted the students. A little later evangelistic meetings were held.

Recently word has come that because of present conditions in China, the Reading Room has had to be returned to its previous quarters at the church.



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